

6/21/2004 This Week In Congress

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June 21, 2004

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Reducing Prices at the Gas Pumps, Decreasing Dependence on Foreign Energy

This week, the House passed legislation to help bring down the cost of fuel and to reduce U.S. dependence on foreign energy sources. Included in the legislation were several provisions to reduce the price of fuel and also to promote renewable fuels, such as ethanol, biodiesel and wind energy.

Bio-based fuels represent a growing portion of the Kansas agriculture sector and provide a boost to the state's economy. Currently, six ethanol plants in Kansas produce 122 million gallons of ethanol, creating a market for 45 million bushels of corn and sorghum each year. The legislation contains a renewable fuels requirement to add five billion gallons per year of ethanol and other renewable-based fuel to the nation's gasoline. Last year, nearly three billion gallons of ethanol were produced across the country.

This legislation would also decrease the U.S. dependence on foreign energy sources. In 1973, America imported 30 percent of its oil from foreign sources. Today, the U.S. imports nearly 60 percent of its oil, sending more than \$100 billion a year to oil-producing nations. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, America loses 12,389 jobs for every billion dollars it spends on imports. At today's oil prices, that means America is sending more than 1.7 million jobs overseas for oil every year.

When Americans pay more than two dollars per gallon to fill their cars and trucks, this has negative effects on our ability to do business, and it is costing our families more out of pocket. Many businesses are raising their prices because delivery costs are increasing, and our families are second-guessing their summer vacation plans. We must implement better energy policies, which will reduce the costs that Kansans pay at the pump.

The legislation now goes to the Senate for consideration.

Promoting Kansas Wheat Sales to Iraq

The House Agriculture Committee held a hearing this week to review the current state of agriculture production in Iraq and the likelihood of resuming commercial sales of U.S. agricultural products. The hearing also focused on allegations of improprieties by the Saddam Hussein regime, resulting in corruption of the United Nations' "Oil for Food" Program. The United Nations is investigating the alleged corruption.

Years of financial neglect and an absence of a commercial market in Iraq have damaged the country's agriculture sector. While the agriculture sector is rebuilding, Iraq will have to rely on imports of food and agriculture products. As the combines roll in Kansas, there is potential to sell Kansas wheat to Iraq.

Witnesses testified that they are confident that commercial sales of U.S. agriculture products will resume in Iraq. They expect that Iraq will need to import 2.6 million tons of wheat and one million tons of rice this year. Earlier this year, the U.S. sold 325,000 tons of wheat to Iraq. Prior to the 1991 Gulf war, the U.S. sold three million tons per year to Iraq.

The U.S. agriculture industry is attempting to foster relations with Iraqi buyers, and the Kansas Wheat Commission and others have been working to sponsor a group to visit the United States. However, problems associated with obtaining visas and clearances have forced the group to postpone the trip until July.

It is critical that the U.S. agriculture industry re-establish relations with Iraqi buyers. Iraq is yet another market for Kansas products, and I look forward to having the Iraqi delegation in Kansas to discuss potential wheat sales.

Assisting Livestock Producers

The House passed legislation this week that would provide tax relief to ranchers forced to sell their livestock due to weather-related disasters. I originally introduced this legislation in January 2003, which was included in the American Jobs Creation Act of 2004.

Under current law, a rancher has two years after the weather-related sale of livestock to reinvest in his herd without tax consequences. This is often not long enough to rebuild a herd. My legislation would give ranchers up to four years after the sale of livestock to replace the herd without tax consequences. It would also give the U.S. Agriculture Secretary the discretion to extend this provision if the weather-related conditions continue for more than three years.

As many parts of Kansas enter the fifth consecutive year of drought, we need to give our livestock producers every opportunity to recover from their losses and rebuild their herds. This change will help alleviate the unfair taxation our producers face when forced to sell off their herds because of the drought.

The Senate passed similar legislation last month. A conference committee will now work out the differences between the House and Senate-passed versions of the legislation.

Funding Approved for Fort Larned Building Restoration

The House approved \$869,000 this week to complete the restoration of the Commanding Officer's Quarters at the Fort Larned Historic Site outside of Larned. The funding was included in the funding legislation for the Department of the Interior for 2005.

Fort Larned is an important historical site and played a prominent role in protecting the Santa Fe Trail during the 19th century. Unfortunately, not all of the nine original buildings at the site are open to the public because they have not been restored. Working with local leaders, I am pleased that we were able to obtain funding to complete the restoration of the Commanding Officer's Quarters. We must make certain that this important part of American history and Kansas heritage is preserved for future generations.

The Commanding Officer's Quarters, located on the west side of the parade grounds, is one of the largest buildings at the fort. During its peak use between 1867 and 1878, the building was home to a rotation of roughly 13 commanding officers, including Major General Winfield Hancock and Lieutenant Colonel George Custer. Other famous visitors, such as William "Buffalo Bill" Cody and Kit Carson, were guests at the Quarters.

Celebrating Flag Day

In honor of Flag Day on Monday, June 14th, I would like to remind Kansans that American flags can be flown over the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. to honor family and friends or special events. Flags that are flown over the Capitol include a personalized certificate stating the date flown and specific occasion. Various sizes of flags are available in either nylon or cotton.

If you would like more information about buying a flag or to place an order, please visit my website at: <http://www.house.gov/moranks01/flags.shtml>. If you have additional questions about ordering a flag, please feel free to call my Washington, D.C. office at (202) 225-2715.

Visiting WaKeeney

On Saturday morning, I had the opportunity to visit WaKeeney and talk with area residents. I appreciate meeting with Kansans and local business to gather their input and suggestions on ways I can better serve you in Washington.

During stops at the donut shop, restaurant, Harries Motors, the coop, pharmacy and the lumberyard, I visited with area residents about issues affecting Kansans. The conversations in WaKeeney reflect the concerns that many Kansans share: the ongoing drought, increased fuel prices, the wheat harvest and the depletion of Cedar Bluffs Reservoir. Visiting towns such as WaKeeney is important, as it gives me the opportunity to meet directly with the people I represent and gain a better understanding of the concerns that Kansans and their communities face.

In the Office

Monsignor John Weber and Mary Ann Powell, both of Salina, were in the office to discuss funding for Head Start and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Bob Riedel with the Council for Exceptional Children of Abilene was in the office to also discuss funding for IDEA and the federal No Child Left Behind Act. The President of Kansas Jaycees, Dawn Grimes of Shawnee and Joseph Stiles of Chapman were in the office to talk about energy legislation.

Members of Kansas 4-H were in to discuss agriculture, including Cody Bevan, Barrett Smith and Matt Lamb of Macksville; Cody Calkins and Danny Koons of Lakin; Heather Edwards, Whitney Plunkett and Justin Kuntz of Scott City; Steven Foster of Eskridge; Jessica Fox and Bryce McAllister of Syracuse; Jill Fritzemeier of Stafford; Shelby Griffin of Sublette; Ellen Huschka and Kelsey Lee of Garden City; Adam Knepper of Clay Center; Nathan Knoblock of Madison; John Larson of Galva; Katie Mannebach of Oakley; Lauren Martel and Hayley Milch of Larned; Jeana Martin and Cammie Mills of Hugoton; Hannah Nielsen of Sylvan Grove; Emily Schneider of Smolan; Erica Stein of Gypsum; and Alicia Thiessen of Beloit. Dorothy Hutchins of Scott City has been sponsoring the group to Washington, D.C. for the past 15 years. This year marks her final trip with the group. Also accompanying the group was John Stannard of Russell.

Members of the Kansas Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance were in to talk about the importance of physical education. In the meeting was Dr. Vicki Worrell with Wichita State University, Dr. John Zody with

Fort Hays State University and Joyce Ellis from Kansas Wesleyan in Salina. Erika Stillwell of Haven and Terra Wiens of Newton were in on behalf of the Presidential Classroom.

Winners of the Kansas Electric Coops Youth were in town this week to learn more about the government and the importance of getting involved in grassroots legislation. Making the trip this year was Joshua Bishoff of Allen, Lindsey Jessup of Almena, Samantha Small of Caldwell, Benjamin Boroughs of Cimarron, Megan Struck of Colwich, Courtney Call of El Dorado, Bryce Bishop of Hays, Chelsea Shrack of Iuka, Amanda Look of Lawrence, Kelsey Cavit of Lyons, Sasha Roe of Mankato, Erin Daniels of Minneola, Jennifer Wellnitz of Neosho Rapids, Steven Frank of Ness City, Jordan Frieb of Olmitz, Elizabeth Nowell of Oskaloosa, Ashley Fischer of Robinson, Victoria Martinez of Rolla, Kala VanCoevern of Salina, Casey Wade of Satanta, Rane Nolan of Scott City, David Ross of Stockton, Shelley McClelland of Topeka, Kelsey Ekstrum of Vermillion and Denise Neff of WaKeeney. The chaperones for the trip were Marlayne Hahn and Marcia and Greg Kampling with the Sedgwick County Electric Coop of Cheney, and Shana Holsteen with the Kansas Electric Cooperative in Topeka.

In for a tour of the Capitol this week was Doris Slocombe of Emporia, as were Chris Terrill of Partridge; Dallas Schmidt of Haven and his daughter, Erin. Linda Howard of Hutchinson and her daughter, Lacey, were in for a tour, as were Vicki Galloway of Partridge and her nephew, Sam Eberly; and Kay Berglund of Salina. John and Andrea Zody of Ellis, and their children, Olivia and Magdalene, were in for a tour, as were Tim and Nicki Strickland of Liberal, and their son, Michael. Clay Burkhead of Emporia was in for a tour, as were Kevin and Lori Knoeber of Hutchinson, and their children, Siera, Jessica and Trenton.

Jeff and Stacy Black of Hardtner and their sons, Dalton and Conner, were in for a tour. Doyle and Charlotte Rahjes of Agra and their grandson, William, were also in for a tour, as were Karen Allen of Hays and her daughters, Brenna and Alyson Rohr.

Very truly yours,

Jerry